

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 001018

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR LAROIAN, MRAYNOR
NSC FOR AFRICA DIRECTOR D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/17/2009

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EFIN](#) [EINV](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: POLITBURO MEMBER ON RULING PARTY INTENTIONS,
CONSTRAINTS

REF: (A) HARARE 988 (B) HARARE 959 (C) HARARE 958 (D)
HARARE 882

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5 b/d

1. (C) SUMMARY: ZANU-PF Central Committee member Simba Makoni told the Ambassador on June 17 that GOZ efforts to reach out to the international community, including international financial institutions, were not a compelling priority for the ruling party. The party leadership would not accept any measures that could begin to level the election playing field meaningfully regardless of implications for foreign relations. Makoni suggested that Reserve Bank President Gideon Gono would be unable to go as far as he wanted with economic reforms before scheduled March parliamentary elections. He described the politburo as a dysfunctional policy-making organ in which members marched in lockstep behind President Mugabe when his feelings were known or quarreled to no resolution whenever the President was silent. Makoni also shared observations on the GOZ's posture on the media and on HIV/AIDS. END SUMMARY.

Media, HIV/AIDS

2. (C) Meeting in Makoni's private business office, the former finance minister and the Ambassador opened their discussion with an exchange on foreign broadcasts into Zimbabwe. Makoni asserted that VOA's Studio 7 was broadly pro-MDC but generally factual in its reporting. Acknowledging that he was a regular listener, he said many in the ruling party were relaxed about free information access and trusted in people's ability to sift the wheat from the chaff. Others were not, though, and he confirmed that Kindness Paradza's interview with Studio 7 was a principal source of his trouble. (Note: Paradza's Tribune newspaper was shut down last week and he faces expulsion from the party; ref A. End note.) He observed that most party members avoided contact with the international press but that some, like Party Information Secretary Nathan Shamuyarira and External Relations Secretary Didymus Mutasa, were unafraid. Alluding to the disingenuousness of official media channels, Makoni confided that senior party members often joked privately about the absurdity of GOZ propaganda, such as projections of a 2.4 million MT grain harvest this year.

3. (C) The Ambassador acknowledged the constructiveness of President Mugabe's speech opening the National HIV/AIDS Conference June 16, especially with regard to the importance of a multi-sectoral approach. He underscored the contrast between the tone and substance of that address and the continued combative posture of Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, who was responsible for terminating USG-funded HIV/AIDS-related public education initiatives.

4. (C) Makoni asserted that effecting a multi-sectoral approach was "not impossible" but that a "wheel for mobilization" did not exist in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, the National AIDS Council structure was beginning to operate down to the ward level and home-based initiatives were gaining momentum. Grass roots criticism that funds were not making it to the needy were getting aired effectively. (Note: ZBC has been covering such complaints publicly this week, implicitly placing blame on NGOs rather than GOZ structures. End note.) Responsible NGOs were trying to separate themselves from the bureaucracies implicated in such inefficiencies and would continue to play a vital role. As for the Information Minister, Makoni asserted that Moyo was unaware of such priorities or did not care, and that he and some others were always prepared to find political messages where none existed.

Economic Policy to Remain Inadequate

5. (C) Turning to economic policy, Makoni said that Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono recognized that steps already taken were insufficient to induce re-engagement by the international community, including the international

financial institutions. According to Makoni, monetary policy was going in the right direction but fiscal policy "was not there." Pressure would build for even more public largesse in the run-up to the scheduled March parliamentary election. Getting the land productive once again was critical, but the government still lacked a workable plan. What rules and plans existed were not being followed. Much had to be done to restore the investor confidence necessary to revive trade and industry but "nobody has the heart to do it, especially not before March." He concluded that we would continue to see "drift, words, but no action" until after elections.

Re-election Trumps Re-engagement as Priority

16. (C) Responding to Makoni's reference to possible re-engagement with the West, the Ambassador emphasized that the party faced real choices. In order to re-engage economically, it would have to first show meaningful progress on the political front. In particular, the election playing field would have to be leveled now if Zimbabwe were to have any hope of conducting elections that would be considered free and fair next year. Without free and fair elections, re-engagement would be impossible.

17. (C) Makoni explained that re-engagement with the West was a growing interest among some party members but still not a priority, especially with politicians. The party would project itself as interested in re-engagement but cast the West as unwilling to re-engage on terms short of total ZANU-PF "surrender." Regarding rumored discussions of electoral reforms (ref C), Makoni explained that a sense of triumphalism pervading the party in no way dictated a leveling of the playing field. Quite the contrary, its confidence stemmed from its successes in the tainted Zengeza and Lupane by-elections, which established a blueprint for success (i.e., intimidation, coercion via chiefs and food benefits, etc.) sure to be followed in the run-up to March. Indeed, the party leadership recognized that any relenting on election fairness issues involved unacceptable risks of losing control. The Ambassador again urged that the party take seriously efforts to address electoral imbalances, without which meaningful re-engagement with the USG and others would not be possible.

ZANU-PF's Dysfunction

18. (C) Makoni said that the ruling party's significant lack of "discipline and self-respect" further complicated efforts at re-engagement. He cited the flap over land nationalization (ref B) as evidence that the party was "seriously disjointed" now. He reported that Moyo had purposely distorted Minister for Special Affairs (and ZANU-PF Secretary General) John Nkomo's comments to make him look

SIPDIS

bad. He confirmed that Nkomo's interview had characterized nationalization as pertaining to compulsorily obtained land only, but that Moyo had purposely overstated his comments, only to qualify them later in a way that made Nkomo appear to be flip-flopping. Makoni observed that Nkomo and Moyo were from the same district of Tsholotsho and that "a rough edge" had always separated the two, dating back decades.

19. (C) President Mugabe's proclivity to remain above most frays and to let his subordinates "slug it out" on many issues was central to the party's dysfunctional policy-making atmosphere. Makoni offered the fracas between Party Information Secretary Nathan Shamuyarira and Moyo over the President's Sky News interview (ref D) as an instance in which Mugabe should have spoken definitively and squelched publicized internecine squabbling. Commenting on Tribune reports of strong words being traded in politburo meetings, Makoni conceded that he was out of the country (at the World Economic Forum in Maputo) during the reported meeting, but that discussions in the politburo generally were "polite and correct" but occasionally got "brisk." It usually depended on whether the President's feelings on a topic were known. If they were, there was little meaningful debate; if they weren't, discussion could get more heated. Anybody who could be portrayed as straying at all from generally accepted party principles, though, risked being cast as a "sell-out", which was "very unhealthy" for the party.

110. (C) Makoni identified one notable exception to Mugabe's general inclination to not tip his hand on any particular issues. The President had reacted early and definitively when Jonathan Moyo and others began to cast themselves as presumptive candidates in the upcoming elections. Mugabe had emphasized that nobody could short-circuit established processes and that all candidates would have to be vetted in accordance with party practices and weather the party's primary process. Makoni concluded that the radical Moyo-Made faction was vocal but necessarily dominant in relation to other party voices as long as Mugabe played his hand close to

the vest.

Election Forecast

11. (C) Makoni concluded that ZANU-PF would genuinely do better in the upcoming election compared to 2000 and 2002. The party had support and could generate more support, especially in urban areas. He implied that the party had mistakenly lost its links with the working class, links that could be restored. The President in 2002 had said the party did not need to intimidate because it had a credible platform, even for workers. Makoni recognized that most nationalist movements, including Zimbabwe's, were largely borne on the backs of the labor movement, and recalled that he had urged the party to focus on labor years ago; many agreed but inadequate action was taken.

12. (C) As to campaigning strategy, Makoni conceded that the party could not make a credible claim to have made the lives of most Zimbabweans better. Instead of focusing on economic statistics, the party would have to emphasize that it had worked out the vexing land redistribution and had a plan -- a la Gideon Gono -- to rehabilitate the economy and to re-establish the country's place in the world community.

13. (C) Makoni confided that he did not intend to run for a constituency MP slot in the coming election but would campaign for any ZANU-PF candidate from his district -- if the candidate met to his liking.

Comment

14. Dismissed as Finance Minister and largely ostracized by the party leadership for his free-market economic prescriptions years ago, Makoni lately has been enjoying a resurrection of sorts. Hailing from Manicaland -- historically home to political opposition figures, including Morgan Tsvangirai and Edgar Tekere, -- Makoni is one of the ruling party's most competent technocrats, though he generally is regarded to lack a political base at the grass roots. His modest rehabilitation can be attributed in part to his continued loyalty despite ostracization, the party's desire to project a more refined and competent image to the outside world, and the passage of time. Perhaps more significantly, he and Defense Minister Sidney Sekeremayi are the two most prominent "presidential successor candidates" reputed to be in the faction of retired general Solomon Mujuru. A Mass Public Opinion Institute poll among putative successors to Mugabe last year indicated Makoni was the most popular ZANU-PF figure nationally and the only one to garner geographically diverse support.

15. Makoni's exposition of ruling party motives and strategy is consistent with Embassy conclusions that the ruling party has neither the intention nor the capacity to level the election playing field or otherwise take measures to re-engage meaningfully with the USG at this time.

SULLIVAN